

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### **HOUSE PASSES WELCH BILL PROTECTING EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION RIGHTS OF MILITARY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana House members have approved legislation co-sponsored by State Rep. Peggy Welch (D-Bloomington) that provides employment, education and voting protections for Hoosiers who are serving in the military overseas.

Senate Bill 419, which now returns to the Indiana Senate for further consideration, offers a series of reforms keyed on concerns expressed to Welch and other lawmakers by people who have served extended periods of time in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Indiana's National Guard has done its part in serving with our nation's military in fighting on behalf of freedom and stopping terrorism," Welch said. "In making this commitment, the men and women serving in the Guard have made sacrifices at work and school. Through Senate Bill 419, we hope to give them some relief that will enable them to resume their lives when they return from service."

For example, the legislation provides assistance to workers who have extended periods of military service.

"In discussions on this bill, we have heard stories about some Guard members who have lost their civilian jobs because their time of service was more than a year," Welch said. "Senate Bill 419 requires the employer to retain the individual in the same position or a similar position for the amount of time that the person was on active duty.

"In recognition of the possible inconvenience that this might cause, the bill also provides a one-time \$500 income tax deduction for the employer," she continued.

Welch's measure goes on to provide assistance to Guard members who had to place their educational careers on hold. Provisions include extending the eligibility period for the National Guard tuition supplement program and giving relief to those who are seeking assistance through the Frank O'Bannon grant program administered by the State Student Assistance Commission.

"We also want to give every opportunity for these men and women to participate in elections back home," Welch said. "In that light, we will permit the use of e-mails to transmit and receive ballots, and employ other methods of advanced computer technology to enable them to cast their votes.

"The citizens of Indiana will never be able to adequately repay these men and women for their sacrifices, but we can support measures that demonstrate our appreciation for their service," she concluded.

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